

USE OF THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH LANGUAGES IN CANADA*

At each decennial census, every member of the population is asked whether he or she is able to speak (a) English and (b) French. The information on this subject as recorded on the census schedules is tabulated to show the number of persons who reported ability to speak English but not French, the number speaking French but not English, those able to speak both English and French and, finally, the number unable to speak either of these two languages. In the course of the tabular program, the totals in these four categories are classified by age and sex, by ethnic group and, for the foreign born, by period of immigration.

Out of a total population of 18,238,247 in Canada on the census date, June 1, 1961, 12,284,762 or 67.4 p.c. reported ability to speak English but not French, 3,489,866 or 19.1 p.c. spoke French but not English, 2,231,172 or 12.2 p.c. reported ability to speak both languages, and 232,447 or 1.3 p.c. were unable to speak either English or French. If the 12.2 p.c. of the population who were bilingual (English-French) is added to the number speaking English but not French, and to the group speaking French but not English, it will be found that approximately 80 p.c. of Canada's population in 1961 could speak English and slightly over 30 p.c. were able to speak French.

There has been little change over the past two or three decades in the relative proportions of the English-speaking, the French-speaking, and the bilingual elements in the Canadian population despite the substantial numbers of postwar immigrants, the large-scale population movements within the country, rising levels of education and other factors that might have been expected to have altered the composition of the population with respect to official language. At each census since 1931, just over two thirds of Canada's population have reported ability to speak English but not French, between 17 and 19 p.c. French but not English, and between 12 and 13 p.c. ability to speak both languages.

Regional differences in the ability of the population to speak English, French or both these languages are, of course, rather closely related to the location of Canadians of French and all other ethnic groups, and their relative numbers in specific areas of Canada. A large proportion of the population of French ethnic origin resides in the Provinces of Quebec, New Brunswick and Ontario. Thus, while at the 1961 Census 38 p.c. of the population of New Brunswick were able to speak French, less than 10 p.c. of the people residing in each of the Provinces of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia of the Atlantic region spoke this language. Expressed in another way, although over 90 p.c. of the population of each of the Atlantic Provinces of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia spoke English but not French, the percentage (62 p.c.) in this particular category in New Brunswick was considerably less. If to this category is added persons who were able to speak both English and French it will be seen that 81 p.c. of New Brunswick's population was able to speak English.

In Quebec, precisely the same percentage (62 p.c.) of the population as in New Brunswick spoke one of these languages but not the other, but in this province the situation was reversed with the 62 p.c. speaking French but not English. Only 12 p.c. of Quebec's population spoke English but not French while one quarter or 1,339,000 spoke both languages. Thus 87 p.c. of the population of this province spoke French and 37 p.c. spoke English at the time of the latest census.

The number of French-speaking residents of Ontario at the 1961 Census was 588,506 as compared with 225,549 residing in New Brunswick. Although there were more than twice as many French-speaking persons in Ontario as in New Brunswick, the number in Ontario constituted just under 10 p.c. of the total population of that province in

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